

DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS

Race Equality Policy



The Diocese records its opposition to racist discrimination and harassment, whether verbal, physical or attitudinal, whether intentional or inadvertent, at all levels of the church in the Diocese.

INTRODUCTION

There is a rich ethnic diversity both throughout the Diocese of St. Albans and within our churches. Our church communities represent the whole human spectrum; people of all colours, cultures and ethnic groups stand together in prayer and they stand before God, equally, as his children. Our church membership, both lay and ordained, includes people with origins as diverse as African-Caribbean, Asian, African, North and South American, all parts of Europe and Australasia. All ethnic groups and cultures contribute to the richness of our church lives.

Within this wonderful diversity are some areas where the population is substantially white British. This Policy is as relevant to the church in these areas as it is in the most diverse parts of the Diocese.

Racism continues to pervade all areas of our society and some members of our churches are, sadly, no exception. In 'Seeds of Hope', the report on combating racism in the Church of England (1991), the Rt. Revd. John Sentamu defined racism as:

"...the theory, prejudice and practice of disadvantaging or advantaging of someone solely on grounds of their colour, culture and ethnic origin."

But racism is not just overt discrimination; it is also the hidden, subtle and often unconscious way in which we regard and treat people of other races and cultures. In 1981 Lord Scarman's report into the Brixton riots noted that racism could be 'unwitting', 'unconscious' and also 'unintentional'. It noted too that racism can be an unrecognised and an established part of our institutions. Lord Scarman also referred to 'institutional racism' and this was emphasised in the MacPherson Report (1999) on the Stephen Lawrence murder enquiry, in which institutional racism is defined as:

"The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."

Racism should be both condemned and combated at all levels and in all areas of our church life. In 1988 Paul Boateng contributed to the British Council of Churches report 'Challenging Racism in Britain' in which he stated that racism:

"...scars our country and scars the world, racism represents for those of us who are Christians, a gaping wound in the body of Christ."

Almost twenty years later racism may still be as pervasive as ever and the body of Christ is still wounded. The Church, the body of Christ on earth, is made up of the rich diversity of all God's people and God does not recognise our human divisions of gender, culture, skin colour or ethnicity. *"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."* (Galatians 3.28) We are all made equally in the image of God (Gen.1.27) and as Christians our behaviour towards our fellow human beings should always reflect this truth. There are, however, many occasions which demonstrate that we do not always live up to this important aspect of our faith.

This policy is part of the Diocese of St. Albans' commitment to working towards God's kingdom, in which all people are treated with justice, fairness and equality.

The Charter of the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (2003) reminds us that,

"Racism is not only a crime, it is a sin that violates Christ's command to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. How we treat one another cannot be separated from our relationship with God"

STATEMENTS OF POLICY

1. Responsibility

The Bishop's Council, acting through the Board for Church and Society, is responsible for establishing and reviewing this Policy for the Diocese as a whole.

Every member of the church in the Diocese is responsible for conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this Policy in all their church-related activities.

2. Management and Review

The Diocese will establish and maintain a Diocesan Race Equality Committee to advise on the operation of this Policy.

The Committee is appointed by the Board for Church and Society for each triennium and comprises a minimum of four people, including:

- At least one member of the clergy
- At least one lay person
- At least one person drawn from non-white ethnic minorities
- A least one member of the Board for Church and Society
- At least one member from each Archdeaconry

The Committee may from time to time appoint a voluntary Race Equality Officer to be a focal point for enquiries and information in matters dealt with under this Policy.

The Committee may voluntarily collect information on (a) the ethnic distribution of holders of appointed and elected positions, (b) the ethnic distribution of church membership and the community at least after each review of parish electoral rolls in the diocese and (c) reported racist incidents and how they have been resolved in each year. It may also keep a record of action taken to promote race equality in the diocese, such as (d) training provided, (e) action to promote vocation among ethnic minorities and (f) action to encourage/facilitate members of minorities to apply or stand for appointed and elected positions.

The Committee has the power to interpret the operation of this Policy within the Diocese, for example through the provision of advice on promoting race equality and ethnic minority participation in the structures of the Diocese.

The Committee will report through the Board for Church and Society to the Bishop's Council.

3. Church Membership and Mission

The Diocese welcomes new church members from all cultures, including ethnic minorities. We encourage our parish churches to be welcoming and relevant to members of ethnic minorities living in the parish, promoting their participation on parish electoral rolls and in the wider life of the parish.

In pursuing its mission to spread the Gospel among its members and in the community at large the Diocese encourages parishes to take account of the needs and preferences of all the members of their communities. It is important to avoid subtle as well as overt obstacles to diverse participation. Such obstacles might arise, for example, in the nature of:

- Welcome to church activities
- Liturgy
- Instruction
- Social responsibility activities and community action.

At the same time we encourage parishes to use the cultural diversity that is present in our communities to enrich their liturgy and church activities.

The Diocesan Race Equality Committee may identify examples of good practice in these areas from within the Diocese and elsewhere and hold them out for others to draw upon.

The Diocese encourages the inclusion of racial justice issues in the church's teaching, worship and mission, taking advantage of opportunities such as Racial Justice Sunday in September each year.

4. Appointed and Elected Positions

The Diocese encourages suitably qualified members of ethnic minorities to put themselves forward as candidates for appointed and elected positions at all levels of church life in the Diocese.

We wish to see our appointed and elected positions filled with people of ability, regardless of their ethnic origins. We would like to see this result in these positions being held by people with a balanced mix of ethnicity, broadly reflective of the composition of the Diocese

4.1. Diocesan Positions

The Diocesan Race Equality Committee may advise upon minority ethnic representation among:

- The Bishop's Council
- The Diocesan Synod
- Holders of Diocesan posts, ordained and lay
- The membership of Diocesan Boards and Committees, particularly the Board of Finance, the Pastoral Committee, the Board of Education, the Board for Christian Development, the Board for Church and Society, the Advisory Committee and the Liturgical Committee.

The Committee should also consult with the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban at least once in each triennium about minority ethnic participation among the Chapter and Staff of the Cathedral.

4.2. Deanery Positions

Each Deanery may encourage suitable ethnic minority candidates to stand for election and use co-options and appointments as appropriate to address low participation.

4.3. Parish Positions

Each Parish may seek to achieve suitable ethnic participation among the people it elects to Deanery Synod, on its Parochial Church Council and in parish appointments, such as organists or directors of music, youth directors and administrators.

5. Clergy and Readers

5.1. Vocations

The Diocese encourages appropriate candidates for the ordained ministry and for Reader training from all persons, including ethnic minorities. In support of that we wish to let potential candidates in the Diocese encounter suitable local and international role models in ministry (e.g. visiting and local ethnic minority clergy).

We recognise the need at times to tailor Reader training programmes to meet the requirements of minorities where appropriate.

It is hoped that the Bishop's Selectors may include members of ethnic minorities.

5.2. Appointments

The Diocese encourages appointments of clergy and Readers that reflect to the extent possible the ethnic composition of the Diocese overall and particular parishes with significant ethnic minorities.

Equally the Diocese welcomes the appointment of ethnic minority clergy and Readers to work in parishes composed substantially of members of the ethnic majority.

6. Awareness Training

The Diocese acknowledges that discrimination and inappropriate behaviour can be either inadvertent or based on prejudice. The Diocese may seek to minimise the incidence of inappropriate behaviour in the church by arranging awareness training for its staff and officials, members of Boards and Committees, clergy and parish officials, particularly those with responsibility for appointments at all levels.

The Diocese also encourages and wishes to facilitate training to allow minority ethnic communities to develop their understanding of the representative and governance structures of the Church of England and the opportunities available to them to participate in these structures.

The Diocese intends to make appropriate resources available to permit suitable training to be provided at all levels over time.

7. Education

The Diocese welcomes the race equality policies maintained by the Diocesan Board of Education and by church schools in the Diocese. The Diocesan Race Equality Committee will consult as appropriate with the Diocesan Board of Education to ensure that our policies and objectives in race equality are consistent.

8. Inappropriate Behaviour

We wish to provide loving support and advice to all members of the church involved in an incident of racistly inappropriate behaviour, whether as the person affected or as the alleged perpetrator, in a manner consistent with the spirit of this Policy. We wish to see such incidents (which we define along the lines of the Stephen Lawrence Report to be any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person, acting reasonably) dealt with promptly and as fairly as possible.

Guidelines on a recommended approach for dealing with inappropriate behaviour are set out in the Appendix to this Policy.

It is also recommended that the Diocesan Race Equality Committee be informed of incidents of inappropriate behaviour and how they have been dealt with.

9. External relationships

The Diocese and its officials and representatives will seek to ensure that any external bodies (including ecumenical initiatives) in which it participates respond to racism in a manner consistent with the principles in this Policy.

The Diocese will seek as far as possible to appoint contractors that observe standards consistent with this Policy (e.g. follow the Wood-Sheppard principles for race equality in employment).

10. Success Criteria

The Diocesan Race Equality Committee may set criteria for judging the success of this policy, including, for example:

- increasing participation of ethnic minorities at all levels in all church activities in the diocese
- effective and timely handling of complaints and reports of racist incidents
- reducing numbers of reported racist incidents over time, once an initial baseline period has passed.

DEFINITIONS

Ethnicity refers to a person's identification with a group which shares some or all of the same culture, lifestyle, language, religion, nationality, geographical region and history. Everybody belongs to an ethnic group including, for example, the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh. (Herts County Council)

Racism in general terms consists of conduct or words or practices which disadvantage or advantage people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form it is as damaging as in its overt form. (Stephen Lawrence Report as quoted by CMEAC)

Institutional Racism: The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

It persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership. Without recognition and action to eliminate such racism it can prevail as part of the ethos or culture of the organisation. It is a corrosive disease. (Ibid)

A **racist incident** or **racistly inappropriate behaviour** is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or by any other person, acting reasonably. (adapted from the Stephen Lawrence Report)

6th May, 2005

APPENDIX

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH RACISTLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR IN THE DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS

When any incident of inappropriate behaviour involving clergy, church staff or congregation members occurs in the Diocese, the following steps are recommended if the incident is to be resolved within church structures. These steps are without prejudice to the legal rights and responsibilities of the individuals involved. However if police or legal action arises from an incident, that action will take precedence over any diocesan action.

1. Making a Note of the Incident

In the event of an incident of inappropriate behaviour the people involved are strongly advised to write down exactly what happened, when, where and in the presence of whom. Such a record should include any words used and witness statements if possible and should be made as soon as possible after the alleged incident has occurred.

2. Initial Informal Response

The first step in response to an incident is for the person affected to consider requesting the alleged perpetrator(s) either orally or in writing not to repeat that behaviour. The person affected might go to the perpetrator alone or with a friend, or follow up with a friend if a one-to-one approach does not work. We hope that many incidents will be resolved with understanding and respect in this way.

3. Formal Resolution

If such a response does not lead to a satisfactory outcome; or if the person affected does not wish to confront the alleged perpetrator; or if the person affected thinks that a more significant response is required, then further action is necessary. At this stage, the person affected might wish to consult a friend or colleague for advice. Where relevant, they might wish to take advice on their legal rights.

Incidents of racially inappropriate behaviour that are not able to be resolved informally and are not subject to police or legal action will be dealt with through existing grievance procedures, taking account of the spirit of this policy.

- Any incident which falls under the grievance procedures of the Diocesan Board of Finance's Equal Opportunity Policy shall be dealt with under that policy, in line with Discriminatory Employment Legislation.
- Any incident involving a member of the clergy shall be dealt with by the Bishop and his Staff in line with established procedures for complaints against clergy and in accordance with the Clergy Disciplinary Measure when it has come into operation.

- Any incident within a parish that does not involve a complaint against a member of the clergy should be handled within the parish. The parish might wish to consult the Diocesan Race Equality Committee, particularly if independent advice might be appropriate.

Complaints of incidents should be discussed fully and frankly, and with sensitivity for the concerns of the person affected.

The Diocese strongly recommends that a written note be made of all such racist incidents dealt with by any person or body to whom they are referred, outlining the nature of the complaint, the action taken and how it is resolved. It is recommended that such a note should be made during or immediately after the resolution of the incident; and that a copy of the note should be passed to the Secretary to the Diocesan Race Equality Committee as soon as possible.